

Testimony at the Appropriations Cmte Public Hearing, 11March2010

Good afternoon, distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Thomas Burr, and I am a Board Member (and past President) of the Manchester Affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, otherwise known as NAMI. I also serve on the Board of CT State Chapter of NAMI, and I am a member of MISH, the Manchester Initiative for Supportive Housing. I come before you today to advocate for the continued funding for Homeless Shelters, Mental Health Services, and Supportive Housing, and against the planned cuts as outlined in the Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan.

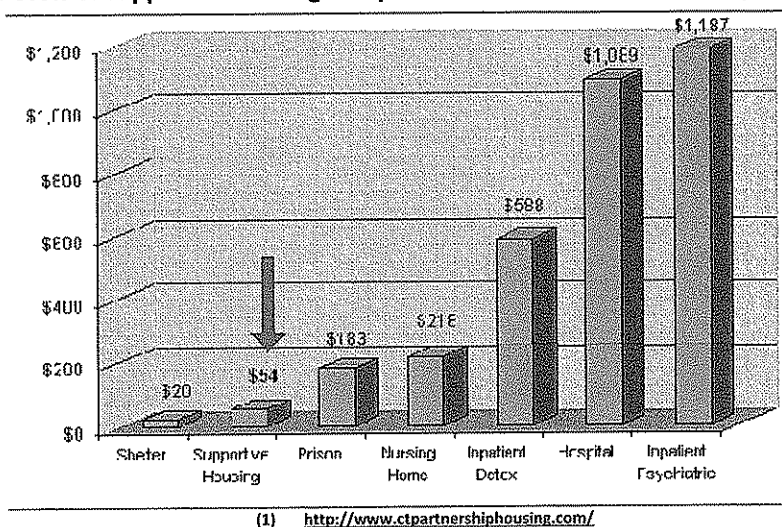
As I understand it, The Governor's Budget mitigation plan, if enacted by the legislature, would "suspend balance of funds" (\$6.2 million) in the Department of Social Services non-entitlement grant programs including housing/homeless services during this fiscal year. These cuts to critical housing and homeless services are not acceptable, and won't save the state or its taxpayers any money.

The DSS homeless/housing line item provides critical funding for:

- emergency homeless shelters (44 across Connecticut, some serving families, others serving single adults)
- transitional living programs (31 sites, both family and single adult)
- shelters for victims of domestic violence
- residences for persons with AIDS (serving almost 2,000 people)
- eviction and foreclosure prevention
- rental assistance (serving about 2600 families, including those with disabilities)
- security deposit guarantees

You should also be aware that many studies have found that people with a Mental Illness or substance abuse issue who have a stable home environment through Supportive Housing will sooner be able to enter Recovery, eventually getting jobs and becoming an asset to their community. Not only is Supportive Housing the best method for helping people with Mental Health and/or substance abuse issues recover, but it is also LESS expensive for the State, and its taxpayers. Refer to the graph below, which is provided courtesy of the Partnership for Strong Communities "Reaching Home" Campaign:

Graph: Costs of Supportive Housing Compared with Other Forms of Care, per diem ⁽¹⁾



IN SUMMARY, continued funding for Homeless Shelters, Transitional Living Programs, Rental Assistance and Supportive Housing is not only the moral thing to do for one of the most vulnerable segments of our society, it is the smart thing to do for the community, and the **Fiscally Responsible** thing to do for the taxpayers here in the great state of CT.

Respectfully Submitted,

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